

# Associated Baptist Press

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## **FMB will delay trademark application on Lottie Moon offering, Rankin says**

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board announced May 18 it will delay its application to trademark the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering until after discussions with the offering's traditional promoters -- Woman's Missionary Union.

WMU leaders said they were "surprised and disappointed" when they recently learned of the trademark application, filed 10 months ago by the FMB.

In a May 18 statement, FMB President Jerry Rankin said the board was "deeply sorrowed and regret(s) that we have offended the WMU, which fills such a strategic role as a partner in missions education and promotion."

Rankin said he and WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien will meet at the "earliest opportunity" to discuss the matter.

The Lottie Moon offering, named for a 19th-century missionary to China, provides nearly half of the funds for the Foreign Mission Board's overseas efforts. It is sponsored jointly by the Richmond, Va.,-based FMB; WMU, an auxiliary based in Birmingham, Ala.; and the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, a men's missions-education organization in Memphis, Tenn.

The future of that partnership has come into question of late, however, with a proposed restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention that ignores Woman's Missionary Union while calling for the Foreign Mission Board

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

to assume primary responsibility for promoting the annual offering.

Members of the blue-ribbon committee recommending the restructure plan said they were empowered to study only agencies of the SBC and thus could not grant an assignment to WMU, which elects its own executive board.

Some critics, however, have accused the committee of intentionally shunning WMU, whose leaders have not embraced the inerrancy movement which gained control of the convention during the 1980s.

Rankin in February took the lead in trying to console WMU members that "nothing has changed" in the auxiliary's historic partnership with the FMB. Meanwhile, administrators at the agency had already begun the application process for a trademark on the offering, without the knowledge of WMU leaders.

The application became public May 11 after a routine computer database search by an attorney working for the Virginia WMU turned up the pending application. That discovery prompted the executive board of the Virginia WMU to pass a statement May 13 requesting Southern Baptist WMU to "immediately investigate this matter ... and take appropriate action."

Rankin said the trademark was sought to prevent churches from using the Lottie Moon offering to raise funds for causes other than the FMB.

In his May 18 statement, Rankin defended the application as a "responsible business decision suggested by legal counsel" but insisted "there was no intention of offending or neglecting the Woman's Missionary Union."

He noted that a 1990 legal opinion -- which WMU has never disputed -- cited the FMB as the unquestioned beneficiary of the offering's receipts. But he added that legal counsel "advised us of our vulnerability with regard to such a large source of funds without any legal registration of the offering that would clearly identify the Foreign Mission Board as the beneficiary."

"Because the leaders of the WMU had been contacted and have not questioned the legal identification of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering with the Foreign Mission Board, it did not occur to us to consult with them further. We regret that oversight and insensitivity to their historic identification with the offering and would not want to proceed without further consultation with them."

O'Brien said she was "pleased with this action."

"When a Christian brother asks for forgiveness, you give it," she said. "The details will have to be worked out later. This is the first step toward a fuller understanding of this unfortunate incident."

O'Brien called the offering a "symbol of the commitment of WMU to the sharing of the gospel around the world. To remove that representation from us is like removing something of our heart."

"We are grateful for the acknowledgement and understanding of Dr. Rankin to the depth of feeling about this issue in the hearts of WMU members," she said.

Rankin said earlier the application for trademark status has nothing to do with the board's relationship with WMU but is intended only to protect the name from unauthorized use.

Rankin did not cite examples of churches that have misused the offering. But he said that could refer to churches that use the Lottie Moon offering to raise money for both the FMB and the rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or it could refer to "megachurches" that attach Lottie Moon's name to a once-a-year unified missions offering that funds the FMB and independent non-SBC missionaries. "We're vulnerable to that," he said.

"A church has a right to send funds anywhere it wants ... but funds for the Lottie Moon offering are legally for the Foreign Mission Board," he said.

Cecil Sherman, coordinator of the Fellowship, called the FMB's attempt to obtain a trademark on the Lottie Moon offering "a pretty clear-cut illustration of the FMB stealing something from the WMU." For the FMB then to blame Fellowship churches, Sherman added, "is a clear case of somebody being caught with his hand in the cookie jar and trying to find someone else to accuse."

The Fellowship, Sherman said, has "gone out of its way to be ethical" in promotion of its Global Missions

Offering, even printing special envelopes to distinguish it from the Lottie Moon offering.

The Lottie Moon offering was started by WMU in 1888. WMU decided how to spend the money until 1956, when the auxiliary's leaders announced they would take only an advisory role in determining expenditures, with final approval by the Foreign Mission Board. WMU leaders also determined at that time to change it to a churchwide offering and invite men also to contribute. Previously, it had been considered exclusively a WMU offering.

Lottie Moon was a colorful and sometimes controversial Southern Baptist missionary who served in China from 1873 until she died from starvation on the way home from the mission field in 1912.

In 1887 she wrote a letter suggesting women in Virginia organize a special Christmas offering to help her raise money for an infrequent furlough. The following year, Woman's Missionary Union was organized and immediately took up Moon's challenge by instituting an annual offering and week of prayer for foreign missions.

Moon's spirited missions reports in U.S. churches, delivered in Chinese dress, were popular but derided by some male critics as preaching, wrote Leon McBeth in his 1987 history. "The Baptist Heritage." Her martyr's death captured the imagination of Southern Baptists, causing the annual missions offering to grow dramatically, McBeth noted.

In 1918, at the suggestion of Annie Armstrong, the WMU's first corresponding secretary, the annual offering was named the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions.

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## **Christian Coalition, religious leaders clash over agenda**

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition unveiled a new legislative agenda designed "to strengthen families and restore common-sense values" during a May 17 news conference at the U.S. Capitol.

Among reforms outlined in the 10-point "Contract with the American Family" is a "religious equality amendment" to the U.S. Constitution. The amendment would permit voluntary, student- and citizen-initiated prayer on courthouse lawns, during high-school graduation ceremonies and at sporting events, reversing recent judicial rulings that those activities violate the First Amendment.

The agenda also calls for channeling public funds into private and religious schools, defending parental rights against an international children's-rights initiative, and limiting abortions.

"This agenda is not a Christian agenda, a Republican agenda or a special-interest agenda. It is a pro-family agenda that is embraced by the American people, Republican and Democrat, Christian and Jew, Protestant and Catholic, black and white," said Ralph Reed, executive director of the 1.6 million-member Christian Coalition.

"These proposals are the 10 suggestions, not the Ten Commandments," Reed said. "Today we make no threats, issue no ultimatums, present no demands. This contract is designed to help Congress devise legislation as it tackles a cultural agenda after the first 100 days [of the congressional session]."

Reed called the contract a mainstream agenda. That claim drew an immediate disclaimer from a number of religious leaders at another press conference later in the day.

Reed said religious conservatives have gained "a place at the table, a sense of legitimacy and a voice in the

conversation we call democracy."

Barry Lynn, an ordained minister and executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said what Reed really wants is to "saw the legs of the chairs of everybody else at the table."

Disputing Reed's claims that the coalition's agenda is non-sectarian, Lynn said Robertson's group "won't rest until they usher in an officially Christian America."

"The real contract with American families is the Constitution, and we don't need to amend it or do an end-run around it," Lynn said.

Lynn said the contract is nothing more than a payoff to the Christian Coalition for partisan politicking it performed last November, covered with a religious veneer. "Any candidate who fails to back it will be the target of their wrath," he predicted.

Other religious leaders described the contract as "a document of zealotry" that ultimately would "run roughshod over the American family." The panel of religious leaders' speaking against the contract included Baptists, Jews, Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians.

Reed said the Christian Coalition spent more than \$1 million to promote the GOP "Contract with America," and this new agenda is the second step. The group is prepared to spend \$2 million on this campaign, he added.

Several GOP congressional leaders and a Democratic congressman expressed support for the contract at the Christian Coalition's press conference. Among them were Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, R-Ga.; GOP presidential hopeful Phil Gramm, R-Texas; and Majority Whips Trent Lott, R-Miss., and Tom DeLay, R-Texas.

Gingrich said the contract holds "some key values that matter overwhelmingly to most Americans."

"I just came by as the Speaker of the House to say that we are committed to scheduling the hearings, to scheduling the markups and to scheduling the bills on the floor. We are committed to keeping our faith with people who helped with the Contract with America," he said.

Gramm said there are no "new and novel ideas" in the contract. "These are things conservatives have believed in. And what is important about the contract is that we take ideas that we are already battling over in Washington, D.C., and make them a coherent whole and mobilize the American people behind them," he said.

Gramm emphasized his support for a provision of the contract that would withdraw federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

The government should not be in the business of deciding "what is culture, what is art and what the public should see," Gramm said, adding that he is committed to privatizing public television.

The contract outlines broad issues but did not provide statutory language. Observers on both sides agree that as legislators begin to flesh out specifics, the so-called battle over the American family will be engaged.

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## **Contract lacks specifics, religious leaders warn**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The catch in most contracts is in the fine print, and that portion has yet to be written in the Christian Coalition's new Contract with the American Family, a number of religious leaders warned.

The Christian Coalition unveiled its legislative agenda May 17. Religious leaders critiquing the contract noted it offers 10 broad, innocuous-sounding proposals with no statutory language.

Groups representing Baptists, Jews, Methodists, Episcopalians and others took special exception to the

contract's call for a "religious equality amendment" to the U.S. Constitution. Critics said the proposal merely repackages the various public school-prayer proposals that have repeatedly been rejected by the U.S. Congress.

The initiative poses a serious threat to religious freedom, said Melissa Rogers, associate general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, a religious-liberty watchdog group in Washington.

"The initiative's innocuous-sounding language about religious equality and free expression thinly disguises its aim: undermining one of the two pillars of religious liberty, the First Amendment's establishment clause," she said.

Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition, said the amendment does not seek to restore compulsory, sectarian prayer or Bible-reading in public schools. Instead, the proposal seeks to allow student-initiated, non-denominational prayer in public forums beyond the classroom setting, such as graduation ceremonies, sporting events and on courthouse lawns.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said he doesn't think Reed "believes in his heart" that the Christian Coalition wants non-sectarian prayer.

A non-religious prayer would "begin with 'Dear' and end with 'Amen,' with nothing in the middle," Lynn said. A non-denominational prayer would be words devoid of meaning, which is not the coalition's aim, Lynn added.

Rogers said the Constitution already protects religious practice. Students can pray silently or audibly, even collectively, as long as they don't disrupt school activities, she said.

"But the First Amendment prohibits a teacher from calling on a student to lead the class in prayer, something the new amendment would allow," she said.

"By destroying these thoughtful distinctions, the amendment would allow the government to coerce citizens into religious acts and create entangling alliances between church and state," she added.

Other elements in the contract would provide public tax dollars to support private and religious schools, abolish the U.S. Department of Education, place limitations on abortions and access to pornography on cable television, defeat an international treaty designed to protect children's rights and transfer welfare programs to private charities.

Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tenn., said the contract succeeds in balancing House Speaker Newt Gingrich's Contract with America by alerting the Republican party "that a moral agenda is as important as an economic agenda."

He also praised the contract's priority on family issues and conceded the Coalition's "agenda on pornography and the arts deserves serious consideration."

But Parham said the contract "contains a number of serious flaws."

Parham noted that the contract was based not on any biblical perspective but on "extensive polling and focus groups" among Christian Coalition members and supporters. "Any time a moral agenda is built on polls and focus groups, it is built on the shifting sand of public opinion, instead of the solid ground of biblical ethics," Parham said.

Had the Christian Coalition focused on biblical values, "its agenda would have included concern for the poor, the weak, the disinherited and the imprisoned," he added.

The contract assumes that a reduction in federal taxes will result in an increase in private charity directed to people in need, Parham said. That assumption "misreads human nature and demonstrates little acquaintance with real church life," Parham said.

"Few Christians oppose the lofty goal of replacing 'the welfare state with a culture of caring,'" Parham said, but no evidence exists to indicate that "human beings would be more generous if they had more money."

"Reducing taxes will benefit a few and reduce funds needed to help the poor, especially poor children," Parham said.

Parham pointed out that most church expenditures are not for human needs such as hunger and homelessness but for internal concerns.

He said the agenda "verges on naivety" at points. For example, a modest tax rebate proposed for married couples would have no meaningful impact on divorce, and shifting federal education funds to the state and local levels alone would not achieve the desired goal of getting parents more involved in education, he said.

Parham predicted "the broad section of active church members" would say to the Christian Coalition, "Thanks for your effort, but it's not what the real American family needs."

Representatives of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission were out of their offices on a staff retreat and unavailable for comment.

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-- By Pam Parry and Bob Allen

## **Virginia historical group opposes SBC restructuring**

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- The Virginia Baptist Historical Society has joined similar groups in opposing a plan to dissolve the Southern Baptist Convention's Historical Commission.

At their May 16 annual meeting on the campus of the University of Richmond, society members unanimously adopted a resolution saying they are "vigorously opposed" to a proposal to restructure the denomination unveiled by the SBC Program and Structure Committee in February. The proposal will be voted on at the SBC annual meeting in June. It must be approved at two consecutive meetings before going into effect.

The restructuring plan would assign the Historical Commission's education role to the Baptist Sunday School Board. In addition, the six Southern Baptist seminaries would be asked to administer the commission's library and archives.

The Virginia statement said the restructure proposal furnishes "no adequate alternative ... for properly promoting Baptist history." The resolution calls for specific plans "to inform the churches of our Baptist heritage." It also asks that "sufficient funds" be allocated to operate the SBC's historical collection "under skilled supervision on a permanent basis."

The Virginia Baptist Historical Society is the oldest historical organization of Baptists in the South and has the largest membership of any Baptist historical organization. But it is not the first to raise concerns over the proposal to close the 44-year-old commission.

In April, the Missouri Baptist Historical Commission also adopted a statement encouraging Southern Baptists to scrap plans to eliminate the Historical Commission.

In May, SBC Historical Commission trustees stated they "are not in agreement" with the recommendation to dissolve the agency. The Southern Baptist Historical Society, an auxiliary to the Historical Commission, has said it will continue to function even if the commission is eliminated.

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-- By Robert Dilday

## **Gallup Poll finds 18 percent identify with Religious Right**

By Mark Wingfield

PRINCETON, N.J. (ABP) -- The much-talked-about Religious Right comprises only 18 percent of the U.S. population but its makeup defies common stereotypes, according to pollster George Gallup.

In polls late last year, the Gallup organization asked American adults if they considered themselves members of the Religious Right.

Those most likely to claim that label are Southerners, Republicans, non-college graduates, people over 65 and those who claim to be "born again."

But, contrary to common stereotyping, the Religious Right label also was claimed by a larger percentage of blacks than whites (30 percent vs. 17 percent) and more often by females than males (21 percent vs. 15 percent).

Although the Religious Right has been most closely identified with the Republican Party -- 24 percent of Republicans claim to be part of the Religious Right -- a good number of Democrats claim the label as well. The Gallup surveys found that 16 percent of all Democrats identify themselves as part of the Religious Right.

In reporting the poll results in the April issue of the "Emerging Trends" newsletter, Gallup distinguished between the "evangelical" or "born again" label and those who identify with the Religious Right. Only one third of all Americans who say they are "born again" say they belong to the Religious Right.

Regionally, 26 percent of Southerners identify with the Religious Right, compared to 16 percent of Easterners, 15 percent of Midwesterners and 12 percent of people in the West.

The number of people identifying with the Religious Right stood at 16 percent of American adults one month prior to the 1994 elections, peaked at 22 percent the week before the elections and slid to 14 percent one month later, Gallup reported.

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## **'Revival' in America not yet indicated, Barna says**

GLENDALE, Calif. (ABP) -- Outbreaks of extraordinary spiritual renewal reported across the nation this spring should not be described as a "revival" -- at least not yet -- says evangelical researcher George Barna.

"If 'revival' is used to describe a large-scale spiritual change of heart among people who were previously not Christian, statistical data do not yet exist which suggest we are in the midst of a true revival," said Barna, president of Barna Research Group.

Most of the reports of renewal have involved people who already have a religious commitment. There is no evidence that renewal activities have yet spilled over into secular culture, Barna said.

However, recent renewal activities "may be the starting point for what may eventually become a national spiritual revival," he added. "The renewal activities may be God's way of preparing churches for an eventual influx of irreligious or non-Christian people."

Barna said studies "clearly suggest" that many Americans are searching for many of the qualities usually associated with churches, including truth, purpose, a cause to be committed to and significant relationships with

other people. However, "the Christian church has not yet been chosen by the broader base of adults to meet those needs," Barna said.

Barna cited results of a recent nationwide survey that supported his point. The study found:

-- Church attendance remains plateaued at its lowest point in the last decade, with only 42 percent of Americans attending religious services on any weekend.

-- Bible reading outside of church services hit a new low this year, with just 31 percent of Americans saying they read the Bible in a typical week.

-- An increasing number of American adults who attend church services do not attend as often as they did five years ago.

Further evidence that the church has not expanded its outreach through true revival is found in another Barna poll of 500 senior pastors of Protestant churches. That study found:

-- Average adult attendance at church services is 92 people, a 10 percent decline in the last two years.

-- The proportion of church budgets devoted to evangelistic activity has remained unchanged since the late 1980s. Currently the typical Protestant church devotes about 14 percent of its total budget to activities and salaries related to evangelism and missions.

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-- By Mark Wingfield

## **First degrees granted at Gardner-Webb divinity school**

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. (ABP) -- Gardner-Webb University presented its first-ever master of divinity degrees to five graduates May 13.

The five were among a graduating class of 362 at the Baptist school in Boiling Springs, N.C., and were the first graduates of the university's School of Divinity, which opened in 1993.

Gardner-Webb is one of a growing number of Baptist-affiliated schools to begin offering graduate theological training for ministers in recent years. Others include Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. New theology schools are in planning stages at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Mercer University in Macon, Ga.

The trend toward college-based theological training comes at a time when the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, the primary training ground for Southern Baptist ministers for most of this century, have taken a decided turn to the right. Conservatives who have controlled SBC affairs for more than a decade have instituted conservative reforms at the seminaries, raising fears among SBC moderates that the schools will abandon education for indoctrination.

Southern Baptist moderates already have started one new seminary, the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, in reaction to the conservative trend. Also, an American Baptist school, Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Kan., has added Southern Baptist faculty members in an effort to appeal to moderate Southern Baptist students.

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## **Don't 'Christianize' society, be like early church, Mead says**

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (ABP) -- Instead of trying to "Christianize" society -- so that being a good citizen is equated to being a good Christian -- contemporary churches should seek to emulate the congregations of the New Testament, said church growth expert Loren Mead.

In churches during the Apostolic (New Testament) age, "there were little differences vocationally between laity and clergy -- everybody was a missionary," Mead, director of the Alban Institute in Washington, D.C., told a group of Baptists attending a conference on "Transforming Ministry for the Future" in Winston-Salem, N.C.

A major shift occurred when Christianity became the "official" and "only tolerated religion of the land," Mead said. "You were literally born into the faith," he continued.

Today, as home communities are increasingly recognized as a mission field, churches need to return to a New Testament model where lay people serve as "missionaries" and professional clergy as "the coach or encourager," he said.

"We must return to the Apostolic task of the church -- that is to turn out apostles into the world, not trap them inside the church building," Mead said.

The conference, held March 20-22, was sponsored collectively by Baptist state conventions in North Carolina and Virginia, North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Pilot Mountain Association and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. About 150 ministers attended.

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-- ABP staff

## **'Lovelessness' plagues SBC, ethicist tells American Baptists**

By Marv Knox

SCOTTSBURG, Ind. (ABP) -- Southern Baptists will not move forward until they "learn how to love each other as fellow Christians once again," ethics professor David Gushee told a meeting of American Baptists.

"Christian lovelessness" calls into question whether feuding Christians really are followers of Christ, and that is destroying the church's witness in the world, claimed Gushee, a faculty member at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Gushee, who addressed the annual meeting of American Baptist Churches in southwestern Indiana, admitted he spoke from firsthand experience. "I come to you as one who has experienced the tragedy of Christian lovelessness," he said.

Gushee explained he has been a Southern Baptist since 1978, while theological/political controversy has wracked the Southern Baptist Convention. He also noted he has been at Southern Seminary for two years.

During that time, a new president and conservative trustees have steered the school sharply to the right, creating turmoil among faculty, staff, students and alumni.

Division and lovelessness among Southern Baptists has produced dire consequences, Gushee lamented.

"There is no way ahead, no way forward for us until we Southern Baptists learn how to love each other as fellow Christians once again," he stressed. "No way ahead, no way forward until we realize that Christian lovelessness is a tremendous infidelity to Jesus Christ, an extraordinary calamity, a plague upon our house."

Lovelessness "is a way of treating each other that violates the explicit moral teaching of nearly every book in the New Testament," Gushee said.

"If we believe the Bible is the very word of God to us, how can we persist in such disobedience? How can a Christian people expect to move ahead when they have wrapped themselves from head to foot in the chains of disobedience" to Christ's command to "love one another?" Gushee asked.

Unfortunately, Christian lovelessness extends beyond the SBC to "every level of Christian life, he said.

The Bible describes lovelessness between Christians as the most dangerous church affliction, he said. Moreover, the call for mutual love among Christians is the New Testament's most persistent expectation, he added.

Citing numerous Bible passages, Gushee presented three reasons why lovelessness is detrimental for Christians:

-- It questions whether warring Christians really are Jesus' followers. Supporting his point, Gushee quoted a passage from Jesus' farewell address: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."

-- It questions whether "joyful Christian community" is possible.

-- It causes non-Christians to question the truth of Christian faith. "When we love each other and live together in unity, God uses us to reach a lost world with the gospel," he said. "But when we don't love each other, we repel rather than attract an unbelieving world."

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ADDITION: In the May 16 story, "Foreign Mission Board seeking trademark on Lottie Moon offering," please replace the 9th and 10th paragraphs with the following:

Rankin said the application for trademark status has nothing to do with the board's relationship with WMU but is intended only to protect the name from unauthorized use. Some Southern Baptist churches have raised money for the Lottie Moon offering but sent receipts to entities other than the FMB, he said.

Rankin did not cite examples of churches that have misused the offering. But he said that could refer to churches that use the Lottie Moon offering to raise money for both the FMB and the rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or it could refer to "megachurches" that attach Lottie Moon's name to a once-a-year unified missions offering that funds the FMB and independent non-SBC missionaries. "We're vulnerable to that," he said.

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hand in the cookie jar and trying to find someone else to accuse."

The Fellowship, Sherman said, has "gone out of its way to be ethical" in promotion of its Global Missions Offering, even printing special envelopes to distinguish it from the Lottie Moon offering. The Fellowship "does everything in its power" to prevent misunderstanding and discourage misuse of the offering, he said.

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